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## Extreme Cold

Thousands will brave the cold, wintry weather at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City this February. Whether you are enjoying the games in Utah or taking advantage of the snowy weather in your area, remember these tips to protect your safety and health. [Outdoor Safety](#)

For the most recent CDC report on hypothermia: Hypothermia-related deaths—Utah, 2000, and United States, 1979-1998. MMWR 2002;51:76-8.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5104a2.htm>

Link to \*pdf file: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5104.pdf>

## A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Extremely cold temperatures often accompany a winter storm, so you may have to cope with power failures and icy roads. Although staying indoors as much as possible can help reduce the risk of car crashes and falls on the ice, you may also face indoor hazards. Many homes will be too cold -- either due to a power failure or because the heating system isn't adequate for the weather. When people must use space heaters and fireplaces to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases, as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Exposure to cold temperatures, whether indoors or outside, can cause other serious or life-threatening health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can be affected. To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises.

The emergency procedures outlined here are not a substitute for training in first aid. However, these procedures will help you know when to seek medical care and what to do until help becomes available.

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## Plan Ahead

Prepare for extremely cold weather every winter -- it's always a possibility. There are steps you can take in advance for greater wintertime safety in your home and in your car.

Emergency supplies list:

- an alternate way to heat your home during a power failure:
  - dry firewood for a fireplace or wood stove, or
  - kerosene for a kerosene heater
- furnace fuel (coal, propane, or oil)
- electric space heater
- blankets
- matches
- multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher
- first aid kit and instruction manual
- flashlight or battery-powered lantern
- battery-powered radio
- battery-powered clock or watch
- extra batteries
- non-electric can opener
- snow shovel
- rock salt
- special needs items (diapers, hearing aid batteries, etc.)

## Prepare Your Home for Winter

Although periods of extreme cold cannot always be predicted far in advance, weather forecasts can sometimes provide you with several days' notice. Listen to weather forecasts regularly, and check your emergency supplies whenever a period of extreme cold is predicted.

If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating,

have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector, or find one in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under "chimney cleaning."

Also, if you'll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice yearly.

Your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age, and older people are more susceptible to health problems caused by cold. If you are more than 65 years old, place an easy-to-read thermometer in an indoor location where you will see it frequently, and check the temperature of your home often during the winter months.

Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze. To the extent possible, weatherproof your home by adding weather-stripping, insulation, insulated doors and storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.

### Winter Survival Kit For Your Home

Keep several days' supply of these items:

- **Food** that needs no cooking or refrigeration, such as bread, crackers, cereal, canned foods, and dried fruits. Remember baby food and formula if you have young children.
- **Water** stored in clean containers or purchased, bottled water -- in case your water pipes freeze and rupture -- 5 gallons per person.
- **Medicines** that any family member may need.

If your area is prone to long periods of cold temperatures, or if your home is isolated, stock additional amounts of food, water, and medicine.

### Prepare Your Car for Winter

You can avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Have maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends. In addition, every fall:

- Have the radiator system serviced, or check the antifreeze level yourself with an antifreeze tester. Add antifreeze, as needed.
- Replace windshield-wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
- Replace any worn tires, and check the air pressure in the tires.

During winter, keep the gas tank near full to help avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.

## Winter Survival Kit for Your Car

Equip your car with these items:

- blankets
- first aid kit
- a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for water)
- windshield scraper
- booster cables
- road maps
- compass
- tool kit
- paper towels
- bag of sand or cat litter(to pour on ice or snow for added traction)
- tire chains (in areas with heavy snow)
- collapsible shovel
- high-calorie canned or dried foods and a can opener
- flashlight and extra batteries
- canned compressed air with sealant (for emergency tire repair)
- brightly colored cloth

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This page last reviewed August 10, 2002

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